

GROUND- HOPPER Magazine



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THE MONTHLY MAGAZINE FOR THE INDEPENDENT NON-LEAGUE TRAVELLER!

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- ★ Photographs
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GROUND- HOPPER Magazine

439 Merton Road, Wandsworth
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THE MONTHLY MAGAZINE FOR THE INDEPENDENT NON-LEAGUE TRAVELLER

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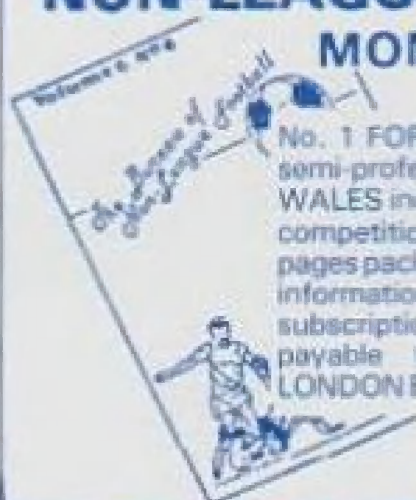
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WHAT'S WHAT IN THIS MONTH'S SPARKLING ISSUE

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

AS A RESULT OF THE POSTAL STRIKE, SOME OF THE REGULAR AND PREVIOUSLY ADVERTISED FEATURES HAVE HAD TO BE OMITTED FROM THIS ISSUE.

PLEASE ACCEPT OUR APOLOGIES FOR THE SLIMLINE ISSUE THIS MONTH. TO COMPENSATE, WE HOPE TO BE BACK NEXT MONTH WITH A SPECIAL BUMPER ISSUE (POST STRIKE PERMITTING).

EDITOR.

COMING NEXT MONTH

The NOVEMBER issue is due out on 14th October, and will have all your regular features including the following:-

- * Club File will feature THREE more non-league clubs, giving information about how to get there, where to eat & drink in the town, ground information, all you need to know about the programme, facilities at the club, plus lots more. It's all packed into two-page articles on each of the clubs, and will build up into a useful series which you can keep for when you decide to visit the club that is featured.
- * There will be more photos, more letters, another great "Spot the Ground" competition with up to £100 to be won, plus our team of regional reporters will be giving all the news and gossip from their particular part of the country.
- * Special next month: Les Hoenig's "Rules of the Game", an in-depth look at groundhopping, with useful tips and information on how you can get the best out of our great hobby. It is exclusive to "Groundhopper Magazine".
- * Also next month, lots of pages of Groundhoppers Club news and information, plus a special feature on our new "Top-Bar of the Year" award, with news of a very special trophy to be presented to the winning club at a later date, which we hope to make an annual event.
- * Our range and selection of photographs are unrivalled in any other non-league magazine, and next month's issue will be no exception with up to two dozen new photos previously unpublished of non-league action or ground shots. Where else can you get so much for £1.00?
- * There will be the usual "Badgers Set" and "Programme Score" columns, with all the latest news and reviews of the new badges and programmes from the non-league scene.

* The brand new ground of NEWPORT (ICW) will be officially opened next month. We will be bringing you all the latest news of the event, tell you what facilities are on offer, there will be a map to show you exactly where it is located, and we hope to bring you EXCLUSIVE photographs of the new stadium at St. Georges Park. This special feature on Newport (ICW) new ground will appear next month.

So there you have it! Next month's 40-page NOVEMBER issue will be mailed out to subscribers on 14th October (post strike permitting!). And if you have any comments about our magazine or non-league football in general, please drop us a line as we will be pleased to hear from you.



NEWSDESK

COMPILED BY STEVE KING



Perhaps the most unique of pre-season friendships took place on August 30th when Clapton paid a visit to Great Mills Leaguers Ransome Town. The two clubs are officially twinned and their initiative in football friendships has gained the full support of the Football Association. The 'Yons' lost 3-0 but won many friends after the match with an impromptu East End 'kneez up'. The Eastenders have also been busy during the close season in erecting a brand new Clubhouse and other ground improvements on their Old Spotted Dog ground. Says Secretary Andy Barr, "It was time that we took the initiative from our landlords. Grand Ned who have done very little to help us with the ground. Again, monies have been spent at some considerable risk, but we hope that in the long term it will prove to be an investment."

Barr also announced that the club are looking to ensure themselves against promotion so that a 'B' ground grading may be attained! Brash confidence or optimism? "Neither" replies Barr, "I expect even the Titanic was insured, and no one expected that to sink!"

Southend Sports have changed their name to Southend Borough, and will be playing their home matches this season at Fashes Athletic's Sunning Ducks Stadium. The club did not wish to keep their original name because the Southend Sports & Social Club with which they were associated at West Delwich is no longer there, and the new name reflects more closely the Borough of Southend and also forms a tribute for the Council itself who has helped the football club so much over the last couple of years. Editor of the programme and Press Officer John Gilmartin told "Groundwork" magazine, "This season for the first time since becoming a senior club we will be doing programmes for all our games in the Green King Sports League and also cup games. The programme will contain 14 pages with an 8-page social section, Editor's notes, managers' columns, visitors' page, line-ups, statistics, etc."

There is a charity game on Sunday October 2nd, k.o. 3pm between a Huddersdon Town XI and a Showbiz XI in a match to raise funds for the St. Elizabeth's Home for Epileptic Women's 25th Anniversary Appeal. St. Elizabeth's is based in Much Hadham, Herts, and this match is part of a £4m National Appeal to build modern self-contained bungalows. The game is at Huddersdon's Lowfield Ground and entrance is by programme only. For your copy, send £1.20 (incl. p&p) to Derek Fieldsend, 42 Rodney Crescent, Huddersdon, Herts. EN11 9EW. Cheques & P.O.'s payable to Huddersdon Town Football Club.

Kidney was made at the Sharnbrook v. Southend Old FA Cup Preliminary Round tie on 1st September. Kid George, 28, a schoolteacher at Fyltham Comprehensive in Dagenham took charge and became the first ever referee of the female sex to officiate in an FA Cup tie.

Tony Williams, Editor of the highly-acclaimed FA Non-League Directory, tells us that the 1988-89 edition should reach the bookshops and non-league clubshops by late September. Also, the book of non-league grounds which he plans to bring out will be published hopefully in the Autumn. The Directory will contain 800+ pages and sell for £9.50.

Rightening up the Wokingham v. Tooting and Wandsworth v. Wokingham games there were few to team attendants on both benches. Tullier Row were also attended to by an attractive brunette in their corner at Basingstoke - and 10 minutes injury time ensued, with a particular tendency for players to go down with thigh strains. Yeovil Town have re-opened the turnstiles at the Brattens End of the ground in order to accommodate visiting supporters. Other improvements include an extension to the refreshment facilities for visiting fans.

Press facilities at Wykebury Old have been improved courtesy of Betty Nelson's England loan. Some of the funds from United's summer encounter with the international side have been used for this purpose and the club are currently considering other ground improvements including toilet facilities.

Maffelford have completed substantial ground work costing £50,000 at their Southbury Road stadium. The work, which includes the construction of terracing along the entire north side of the ground, attracted an £18,000 grant from the pools funded organisation The Football Trust.

The official opening of the new Newport (IDV) ground at St. Georges Park will be on Sunday 17th October when Jimmy Hill will perform the opening paces to the match to celebrate the milestone between Newport (IDV) and Fulham, A.S. 7.30pm. There will be more news of the new ground at Newport in a special feature in the next issue.

WELSH RABBIT

*All the latest news and gossip from the Welsh
non-league scene
with David Collins*



In this part of the country, pre-season friendlies have been pretty elusive, and, for once, the wet Welsh climate is not to blame. We lost three friendlies as a result of the reputation of Cardiff City's hooligans - Ebbw Vale, Bridgend and Port Talbot all cancelling on police advice. This seems a bit of an over-reaction to me - City's fans did no damage during their defeat at Gloucester.

The other main cause of cancellations down here has been the continuing sad saga of Newport County, just about still alive but unable to visit Ebbw Vale, let alone entertain Oxford United. It looked as though a trip to Aberystwyth would go ahead (with Aber meeting County's expenses) but the players' union advised the team not to play.

Merthyr stepped in to entertain Oxford United instead, but United pulled out of that fixture; the weather just failed to add to the list of cancellations. Merthyr's victory at Maesteg Park finishing on a waterlogged pitch!

As I write, Newport's fate remains uncertain: council bailiffs evicted them from Somerton Park for non-payment of £23,000 rent. Debts like this must be frustrating, but it was disappointing to see the council pull the rag like this. It doesn't say much for their commitment to sport in the town.



LEFT:
BRIDGE MEADOW,
HAVERFORDWEST
COUNTY - VIEW FROM
THE ROADWORKS,
APRIL 1983.
PHOTO: DAVID COLLINS.

Haverfordwest County were glad to see last season end, despite a respectable playing record. Unable to use Bridge Meadow for weeks at the start of the season because of major roadworks, when they did return, the attractive town end of the ground had been reduced to a building site (see photo). New changing rooms and clubhouse should, however be finished by Christmas and I hope to report from the new-look Bridge Meadow later in the season.

AFC Cardiff have announced a five-figure sponsorship deal, the largest ever in the Welsh League. Sponsors are the Curran Group, who are already associated with Cardiff City and the Cardiff Devils ice-hockey team. AFC say they will use the money to upgrade facilities at Cwt-yr-Ala, with renovation of the clubhouse a likely priority.

Finally this month, a few intriguing fixtures from the Welsh Youth Cup draw (matches due to be played 15 October, but check nearer the date): Llantwit Fardre v. Brecon Corries, Tregaron Turfs v. Skewen and Treorchy Ath. v. Newport County - this match must be rated doubtful as County don't currently have a Youth side, the MSC having withdrawn its trainees as they had no place of work!

Next month, along with the usual news, I'll be featuring action and results from the first round of the Welsh FA Cup.

GROUNDHOPPER'S VIEWPOINT

with
STEVE KING



Up until about 5 years ago, groundhopping was virtually unheard of except by a tiny few who discovered our great hobby in its infancy, who toured the country in search of new grounds and new experiences. But at that time, because only a handful were familiar with the term 'groundhopping' there was a certain amount of reservation about "strangers" entering unknown territory, and quite often these people would be treated as though they had just arrived from another planet, instead of a couple of hundred miles up the motorway.

After all, why should any sane person want to travel hundreds of miles just to watch two teams they know virtually nothing about and may hardly ever see again? Wasn't there something 'not quite right' about someone spending hard-earned cash to travel the length and breadth of Britain to a remote town or village to see a match attended by a handful of spectators?

Well, that was the case then, but things have changed dramatically since those days when groundhopping was still regarded as something quite "peculiar" to the majority. If you travelled to a completely different part of the country to see a game, you almost felt embarrassed to open your mouth for fear of the locals detecting a "foreign" accent and asking awkward questions as a result of their discovery.

But gradually with the tragic decline in interest of league football, as a result of hooliganism, extortionate prices and poor standards, people became more and more involved with the non-league game, which even now still gives the genuine football enthusiast a mixture of good football, pleasant and relaxing surroundings and value for money without all the fears and anxiety which sadly is all too familiar these days at Football League grounds.

And with that additional interest in non-league football came an acceptance by the majority for people wishing to travel the country in search of new grounds and new experiences that go with it. It became apparent in the mid-1980's at a time of the Haysel Stadium disaster and continual disruption of the professional game by outbreaks of mindless violence on the terraces and streets that good, honest fans were getting sick and tired of the hassle and aggro week in, week out, and needed a new challenge and different aspect of the game to rekindle their flagging interest in a sport which was fast disappearing.

Because many people left league football in favour of the non-league game, many decided that rather than associate themselves with one particular club, they would explore the game outside the league on a wider scale, maybe starting out by trying to visit all the grounds in their local league, and then venturing out to other leagues in surrounding counties.

Now that the numbers seem to be growing at a rapid rate, groundhoppers can go to any part of the country without feeling outcasts, and at virtually all clubs these days, they are made to feel welcome, and indeed in some cases are actually encouraged to visit clubs, quite often welcomed in the club programme if advance information is given that a group are coming from another part of the country.

Now that the new season is in full swing, there are groundhoppers in all parts of the country who are enjoying the experience of going into the unknown, of not knowing what to expect, of visiting a new part of the country that they may have not had the chance to visit before, of arriving at a new ground and watching a game in pleasant surroundings. The enjoyment that is derived from watching the non-league game surely makes groundhopping one of the fastest-growing aspects of watching football today, and is a healthy alternative to the problems associated with the professional game in this country.

Of course, there are some who still have an image of groundhoppers as being duffle-coated, corned-beef sandwich eating pests who are more interested in buying up programmes and talking constantly about their travelling experiences more than watching the actual game, although enough has been said about that in previous issues. Contrary to what one or two think, the majority of hoppers in my experience are perfectly normal people, interested in the game, who enjoy all aspects of groundhopping from the travelling through to the pleasure of visiting a new ground.

If you have any unusual or amusing groundhopping tales from this season, please drop us a line and share your experiences with others with a similar interest.

- GROUNDS IN FOCUS -



ABOVE : THRINGTONS F.C. - Leicestershire Senior League club. Photo: Leo Hoenig.

BELOW : RHAYADER TOWN F.C. - C.Welsh League. Photo: Leo Hoenig



MY FIRST SEASON AS A GROUNDHOPPER

by STEVE PETTIT

My introduction to non-League football was accidental, and inspired by the tantalising glimpse of a ground whilst on my travels through the suburbs of West London back in the early eighties. That brief glimpse of Hillingdon Borough's aesthetic (but now sadly defunct) ground one hot Friday afternoon in August a few years ago led me back there the following afternoon, for what turned out to be their opening Southern League fixture of the new season.

Until that day my football spectating had been confined to matches between League clubs, save for one barely remembered trip to Woking as an eleven year old, so for me the world of non-League football was not so much an alien one as a non-existent one. This trip to Hillingdon broadened my horizons considerably, and opened up a whole new world for me. For instance, I was amazed to find programmes on sale at the ground, and a club shop selling souvenirs. The ground impressed me, as did the standard of football.

The following Saturday I decided to forgo a trip to Stamford Bridge (which included a free ticket offered by a friend) in favour of a visit to Sutton United. Little did I realise at the time that I had actually embarked on a journey that was to take me to so many 'forgotten' corners of England; that I had, in fact, become a Groundhopper - a word which had no meaning for me then.

At that time I was a regular on the terraces at Plough Lane, and had been since Wimbledon moved into the Football League. On their 'away' Saturdays I would go to one of the other League grounds in London. But now I found myself checking the non-League fixtures instead. Frequent sojourns to Craven Cottage or White Hart Lane (etc) were replaced by journeys into the unknown, to exotic locations like Feltham and Molesey. Slowly but surely, my new found interest in non-League football took a firmer grip, and was soon to surpass my interest in watching Wimbledon. Fixtures like Epsom & Ewell versus Maidenhead United began to sound more enticing than Wimbledon versus Mansfield Town, and what chance West Ham versus Arsenal when Tooting & Mitcham were taking on Slough Town or Harrow Borough?

I developed an affinity for my most local side, Addlestone & Weybridge, and began going to Liberty Lane more often than to Plough Lane, much to the amazement of some of my friends. There was something infinitely more appealing about Addlestone's ramshackle little stand and tea hut than there was about any of the League grounds which had once been my regular haunts. Players and spectators exchanging banter on first name terms was a novelty, and I found humour in abundance. I enjoyed not having to worry about getting there half an hour early to park my car, and I enjoyed the more relaxed and friendly atmosphere, not just at Addlestone but at every non-League ground.

In the mid-seventies I can well remember going through a period of disillusionment with football. In seasons 75/76 and 76/77 I went to a total of eleven matches, and although my enthusiasm picked up again after that it was only the advent of Groundhopping that restored my avid interest in football. I can never imagine that happening again. Indeed, even when paying a visit to a local club for a bread and butter non-League match I still feel a buzz when I pass through the turnstile.

No wonder so many new people are turning to Groundhopping every year for their pleasure.

DOWN MEMORY LANE

A nostalgic look back at Non-League clubs or grounds long forgotten

An occasional series where we go "Down Memory Lane" and take a look at a club no longer in existence, or a ground no longer used for non-league football. This month, Dennis Nicholson looks back at the great times of Kingstonian F.C. at their former home at Richmond Road...

Richmond Road, Kingston-upon-Thames, holds many great memories for this famous old club. So it was a sad occasion when Kingstonian played their last match there in the Vauxhall-Opel League on 23rd January 1988 against Bromley, after deciding to sell the ground and move to a new stadium at nearby Norbiton. Amateur Cup winners in 1933, when they defeated Stockton 4-1 at Darlington after a 1-1 draw at Dulwich, K's were a force to be reckoned with in those days. The Isthmian League Championship was won twice before the club again reached the Final in 1960 but were narrowly beaten by Rendon at Wembley Stadium.

They had a very successful side in the 1960's, and played to very large crowds: over 5,000 for one match against Tottenham Hotspur in the old London Challenge Cup competition.

1963 and 1965 saw K's twice lift the London Senior Cup and the Surrey Senior Cup was also won in '67 for the eleventh time.

But the 1970's were not good years for the club as they struggled for a number of seasons to avoid relegation and in 1979 the inevitable happened.



Six seasons were spent in the First Division before promotion to the Premier Division was secured.

A visit to Richmond Road was always an enjoyable one due to the excellent facilities, clubhouse, programme, and friendly faces.

The main stand was an all-wooden structure with covered terracing along the opposite side. There was steep terracing at the Richmond Road end of the ground but at the other end it was only possible to walk up to and behind the goal because of the blocked off car-park and clubhouse area.

But, sadly, in today's climate the increased costs proved to be the deciding factor. The ground was in need of constant repair, especially the main stand, and so until the new ground is ready, Kingstonian will share Division One side Hampton's ground at the Beversen.

A measure of the club's ambitions was the signing last season of ex-Chelsea and Palace defender Micky Droy. Let's hope the new home provides us with those stirring cup-runs of the past as once again the K's hit the glory trail.

LEO'S LINES



A review of the
interesting non-league
stories during the
past month . . . by
LEO HOENIG

For most clubs in non-League football, the competitive season started on the 20th August, so this column, which covers the period up to the 27th has to focus on some of the pre-season activities, and more than I intend for the future - my own travels - in particular my ten match tour of Scotland that led up to the start of the English season.

There was quite a lot going on in the last week or two of the close season, and one of the most welcome pieces of news for Groundhoppers is that Beazer Home League club Ashford Town were finally granted planning permission for their new ground, as they prepare for a second season sharing at Falkenstein. Another club sharing grounds is of course, Maidstone United who will spend the coming season at Darford. I have been trying to keep up with this story, and to tell it in the local paper. It is clear that many of the club supporters view the position with gloom, with suggestions that Jim Thompson, chairman of both Maidstone and the GM Vauxhall Conference does not have his heart in securing the club's future. Definitely in trouble (and don't tell me you did not know), were Newport County, owing £23,000 to the local council as rent on Somerton Park, they were kicked out of the ground as the bailiffs moved in. Manager Eddie May resigned after one month (and no matches) in charge. The position at the ground was not settled until the day before Newport's first match, when the League confirmed they would be allowed to play at Stafford, and Somerton Park was re-opened for the first home match three days later. Somehow I think the troubles at Newport will come to the fore again - watch this space.

I would have thought that resigning as manager without playing a match was somewhat unusual, but Newport were not alone in this - at Vauxhall GM (Beds HCC) David Hayes left West Cheshire League champions Kewell to take over at the start of the close season. However he then had a disagreement with the committee, reportedly over the signing of new players, and so resigned, with the job going to another successful local manager Tony McVey - who last season led Uniares to a Vase run, and to be the first club for 25 years to win the trophy of Liverpool FA Challenge Cup. Liverpool County Combination League and League Cup. I also saw a report (the Independent) that said that the much travelled striker Ernie Moss, stopped off on the books of Matlock Town for one day between being released by Scarborough, and joining Kettering Town. Apart from John Whalley at Newport, five other GMVC clubs started the season with new bosses. Boston United appointed Ron Reid, Kettering went for Peter Morris, Brian Chambers took over at Stafford, and former non-League international Barry Whitbread took over at Runcorn. Finally after six years as Assistant manager, Vicky Bridgen took full control of the Welling United team from Graham Hobbins, whose 22 year spell as manager started when the club was in the Eltham District League. It is impossible to detail all the signings of players in the close season, but a few do stand out, with Macclesfield Town claiming the former Scottish international Derek Parlane, and Infield signing former Chelsea striker Paul Canoville. Telford sold striker Steve Norris to Scarborough for £45,000, and signed Kettering Town's Ian Crawley to replace him. The big spenders were Boston United and Maidstone United - Boston splashed out £12,500 for Frickley's Paul Shilliff as part of a £30,000 spree, while Maidstone spent £16,000 to sign Mark Colley from Sutton United and a further £20,000 on his fellow non-League internationalist Noel Ashford from Barnet.

On a less exuberant note, the FA disciplinary committee met in the first week of the month, and while the headlines went to 'bad boys' Walsingham two non-league teams received suspension fines. Sutton Town (NPL) could be out of pocket of £500, and Deneby United (NCE) by £250 if they don't clean up their acts. In case you are wondering about one or two other non-league clubs, only full members of the FA came up at this meeting - the rest are dealt with by the Counties.

And so, at 11.30 am on Friday 5th August, I set off on the way to my first match of the season - arriving at Fraserburgh about one hour before the kick off, which was at 3pm on the Saturday. The match was in the Preliminary Round of the Highland League Cup, and Fraserburgh, despite taking the lead lost 2-1 to Keith in front of an attendance around the 240 mark. The ground is very pleasant, although cover is limited to the impressive seated stand. Most of the surrounds are grass banking, but there is one unusual feature, in that a building, entirely (as far as I know) unconnected with the football club splits the banking on the side opposite the stand, coming right down to the pitch barrier.

and forming (if they ever require it) a natural line of segregation between home and away ends. No programme was issued (although Fraserburgh are one of the few regular issuers in the league). It should also be noted that I was not the only hopper there - two from the home area, were like myself on holiday, while two from the London area travelled up overnight, and then travelled back over the next night (-people call me crazy!).

The following day I travelled back down to Dunfermline for a second visit to East End Park, in which the home side lost the Fife Cup final by 3-1 to Cowdenhoath. The Fife Cup is for the five senior teams in Fife (the two finalists, plus Perth Rovers, East Fife and Burntisland Shipyard). They play with two semi-finals on the Saturday and a final on the Sunday - all on one ground. A Preliminary match is played earlier in the week. As I think it is an open draw I will look out in future, especially to see if Burntisland are at home. Incidentally I think I should try to explain a little (to the best of my ability) about the different classifications of Football in Scotland. These are all administered separately, and teams (in different sections) do not normally meet in competition, especially between the two main classifications, Senior and Junior. There are only 78 teams in the Scottish Cup, and apart from the Scottish League, only four other Senior Leagues:- Highland, East of Scotland, South of Scotland and North Caledonian. A few teams in the Scottish Cup play in more minor competition with the Amateurs. The six Junior Leagues are also to some extent semi-professional, and at the top levels - Central and Ayrshire Junior Leagues, the teams would be a match for any senior non-League side, and many Scottish League clubs, too. It is worth remembering that only the Premier Division of the Scottish League is entirely full time, and this explains the great divides in Scottish football. Other levels are Amateurs, Welfare and Juveniles (under 21) which are basically part-time football. In the North of Scotland the Amateurs, who play as a summer game are the only level available in some areas. The Junior Leagues are basically on a County basis, and may be compared as a County league in England. Even the Western and Northern Isles have Leagues at this level, and there are a few groundhoppers who visit the Highland Amateur Grounds. I myself cannot resist the enthusiasm to make special trips for these, although I will see the occasional 'big match'.

Back to my travels, and I added another three Highland League games to my total in a further week in the North, at Caledonian, where the townsmen club unfurled the Championship flag, and started their defence of the title with a 4-0 win over Raith; at Raith, who scored a slightly fortunate 2-0 win over Lossiemouth to continue their League Cup progress (an own goal and a penalty). Raith have an unusual stand, in that it has a shutter arrangement removed just before kick off. Finally at Rothes, where the home club, from the smallest town to support a Highland League club, had to stage a League Cup replay against Buckie Thistle. Rothes ground is adjacent to a distillery, the smell from which is clearly detectable while watching the game - was at this, as the 1st goal went, as Rothes went down by 3-2, that led to my happy disposition that night? These matches were punctuated by a Saturday night trip back to Ross County, where I saw the Highland Amateur Cup semi-final, between two Ross-shire teams Maryburgh and Canon Bridge, this was keenly contested with Maryburgh going through to meet Kirkwall Thorrilm (from the Orkney League) in the final. The day after the Rothes trip, I was heading back South, for a Scottish League Cup tie, in which Albion Rovers lost by 1-2 to Premier Division club Hamilton Academical. Because of over stringent ground safety regulations, the crowd was an all ticket capacity at 347, despite the fact that only about 10% of seats in the stand were taken up! On the Wednesday I saw my first Junior game of the trip, a Central League Cup tie between Yoker Athletic and Peterhead, with the home club beating the previous season's Junior Cup finalists by 2-0. A result made all the more sweet for the home club by the fact that two years ago, while Yoker were suffering a financial crisis (sounds familiar?), the manager and some players had defected to Peterhead, leaving Yoker to struggle on to two successive relegations. On the Thursday, my day off from football, disaster struck, as my car was taken severely ill while on the way to Edinburgh for a day at the Festival. The AA came to my aid, taking the car home, while I decided to pay through the snow to get a hire car to finish my holiday, and get to Irvine for the 'Merryman' match. This is a regular Friday night meeting between the two Irvine sides that takes place each August on the night preceding the Wharfedale festival (the third Saturday, after the first Monday of the Month), and alternates for venue between the grounds of the Meadow and Victoria clubs, in front of a crowd of around 1200. Irvine Meadow XI (to give their full name) scored five goals to defeat their rivals. The match is both a special festival trophy (the John Martin Memorial Shield), and a ground match in the Ayrshire Regional League Cup - this means that 90 minutes count for the League Cup game, but if it is a draw (as seldom likely until Meadow opened the scoring after 15 minutes), extra time (and even penalties) would be taken to decide the other cup. My last match was the next day, when I went back to the Seniors, to see an East of Scotland League match between Vale of Leithen and Spartans. Considering that both clubs had been reasonably successful last season (finishing 2nd and 3rd

the 'crowd' was a little disappointing (I mean 11 25), as indeed was the match (which ended 1 1). And so onto the overnight train from Edinburgh, and back to England (and worse to come, back to work). The games I have seen since then do not produce much to write about, although Park Street (Werts CL) repeated Irvine Meadow XI's feat in winning 5-0, and scoring all the goals in the final 20 minutes (against BAC Stenage), and that club should also be commended for their excellent programme.

Meanwhile, by the time I have completed this article, most major clubs have completed 3 or 4 League games. The first trophy of the season went to Chorley, who started their season a week early with a 1-0 win in the VFL Challenge Shield against Norwich RM. The VOL and BNL equivalents were played on the bank holiday when Yeovil easily beat Bromley (4-0) but Aylesbury did not keep up the clean score for the champion clubs, going down by a single Robinson (see goal) to Dartford. High spending for Boston seems to be bringing in early results as they had a 100% record after four games, and did Kettering Town, while Maidstone and Nuneaton were still unbeaten as were Nidderminster (from 3 games). In this note, no club in the Premier Division of the NPL, BNL or VOL still has a 100% record. Bishop Cleeve are early VOL leaders (5 points from 4 games) followed by Kingstons (3 games) and Pateborough (4 games) on seven points. Gooch briefly led the NPL with three straight wins, but then lost at home to Gainsborough, allowing Burton and Fleetwood (18 points each) to pass them, while Rhyd and South Liverpool were also on 5 points. Dover led the BNL by two points by gaining 10 from their four matches, ahead of Crawley Town. Back in the SWVC, Newport were still pointless after four games, while Aylesbury fared little better with no points, but only three games. No NPL or VOL team even went three games without a point, and in their fourth game, the last two BNL Premier sides Merthyr Tydfil and Radditch also gained their first point.

Anyway that's too much for now - in next month's piece, quite naturally I shall be focusing on the FA Competitions - see you then.

Lee Morris.

SMALL ADS

Each month in Groundhopper Magazine, we are offering readers the chance to advertise in the Classified Section of the magazine. If you require a small advertisement, say, 100 words or less, with the above headline, 100 words of advert by the end of the month is 50 pence (including postage). Space is very limited, and will be on a first come, first served basis, and the advert will only appear for one issue. Progressive Dealers are excluded from this offer, small ads are for private use only. Write to: Groundhopper Magazine, Small Ads, 429 Watton Road, Wandssworth, London SW18 5SL. Some restrictions apply to the advertising space.

* BUY NOW: 1988-89 Vauxhall-Opel League YearBook (containing well over 150 pages, containing fixtures for the season, league tables back to the League's formation, lots of facts, figures and statistics, a complete league directory, Vauxhall names and addresses, plus lots more. Price £1 (inclusive p&h), cheques only payable to Vauxhall-Opel League.

NICHOLAS ROBINSON, 226 KIL LANE, THAMES, LONDON, SE13 4PL.

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* REQUIRED URGENTLY: Rare or unusual non-league programmes, especially from clubs who only league occasionally or for one-off games. Localist prices paid for your programmes. Please send list and prices to:-

STEVE KING, 439 MERTON ROAD, WANDSWORTH, LONDON, SW18 5LE.

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* NOTHING Football News (magazine-style) and Dageneg Intuition News (newspaper-style) for sale. For more details please send SAE to:-

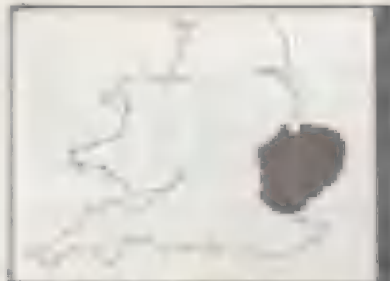
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* WANTED: Football enthusiasts to exchange sports papers and match reports. 1981 Non-League for 1988-89. For details write to:-

MR R RICHARDS, 23 LAUNSTONE ROAD, PORTSMOUTH, HAMPSHIRE.

* HAS anybody got for sale the small enamel South Liverpool badge which was featured in March issue of Groundhopper Magazine in "Badgers Bet"? If so, could they please get in touch.

PAUL LUTHER, 3 REKWEIL CROSS, SPIKE, LIVERPOOL L4 1XW.



THE EASTERN SCENE

with PADDY LILLISTONE

A news round-up from East Anglia
and the surrounding areas

Welcome to the first of my columns from the East side of the country. I will be bringing you all the latest news from the Eastern League, and which may be of interest to readers, so keep reading Groundhopper Magazine every month.

Felixstowe Town of the Jewish Eastern League celebrate their centenary soon, but it could turn into a nightmare if they lose their battle with local residents to build floodlights at their Delia Road Avenue ground.

The league have stated that clubs must be 'lit up' by the start of the 1999-01 season and by then Felixstowe will be alone in not having floodlights.

Their ground is situated in a quiet residential part of this thriving port and is surrounded on three sides by housing. The locals feel that floodlights will increase the noise level from their neighbours and have strongly objected to the plans. The FA General Secretary Ted Croker has appealed the councillors to help the club resolve their problem, but so far they have shown little sympathy. Felixstowe have offered to use telescopic pylons in an effort to compromise, but it seems that their last chance rests with an enquiry which looks like being set or break for the club.

The Jewish Football League (formerly the Building Society Eastern League) started the new season with a new First Division comprising 14 new clubs. They are:- Lowestoft Transport (Lipson), Bury Town Res. Wexley, Mild Town, Downham Town, Fakenham, Southamton, Kings Lynn Res. Long Sutton, Mildenhall, Gosport, Yarmouth, Wroxham and Halesford. The latter were former members of the Essex League and are late replacement for IFC Orfordians who changed their mind. Lowestoft are, surprisingly, the first side from Ipswich, the area's largest town, to enter the league and, like Long Sutton, have stepped across from Sunday football. The entry of 14 clubs saved the league's bottom club Ely City from relegation but to their credit, despite their lowly position, Ely were winners of the league's Sportsmanship Award.

This season also sees the league adopt a three points for a win system. Second and third placed sides Sudbury and Braintree were both disappointed at being turned down by The Senior Essex League, with neighbours Kings Lynn, Chelmsford and Bury all in the Southern Division, this would have been an ideal time for them to join. Braintree are building a new stand for the start of the new season whilst Sudbury have plans in an advanced stage for a new stadium at nearby Barnard with their Town Centre home being sold off for development. Interestingly, Sudbury's visit to Aylesbury in the FA Cup last season impressed their Directors so much that they are planning their new stadium on the Conference club's impressive set-up.

F.C.L. outfit Wivenhoe Town have signed a massive sponsorship deal worth a six figure sum over 5 years. Five years ago they had no stand at all, but now having completed a covered stand behind one goal to complement their first stand of two years ago, they plan a third 750-seater effort complete with executive boxes by the end of the season. It all seems a bit 'over the top' for a small village team situated 1 mile from Colchester who itself struggles to maintain a 4th Division side. Braintree are also building a new stand to seat 200, and their application to join the Senior Essex League was rejected because of their lack of seating.

Programme News: Bury Town of the E.M.L. Southern Division are opening a shop this season, and enquiries can be made to the club at Elm Meadow, Cotton Lane, Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk. They have a large supply of Ipswich Town programmes available. Two new issuers in East Anglia this season are from the Suffolk & Ipswich League. Old Newton United - contact M. Conline, 12 Falconer Avenue, Old Newton, Stowmarket, Suffolk - and Epsom & Aspal FC - contact Chris Buckle, 1 Thirlmere Drive, Stowmarket, Suffolk. Both require an a.s.e. and 10p.

CLUB FOCUS : NEWMARKET TOWN. Town are members of the Jewish Football League and play at 'RED CLEVELAND ROAD, Newmarket. The ground can easily be found from the Railway Station in the town centre by turning right into Green Road, right at the next crossroads and continuing up the hill, the ground being on the left. The town of Newmarket lies on the A15 trunk road and is close to the M11. There is a direct rail link from London. The ground has grass standing on three sides with a small wooden stand on the fourth, seating about 200. Beneath is the dressing room area. The club has recently erected floodlights and a fine brick clubhouse and bar. The bar is open on matchdays and hot snacks are available. The programme is rather basic and costs 20p. Continued on page 34



A REGULAR LOOK AT
A TYPICAL MONTH
IN THE LIFE OF ONE
OF OUR READERS

MY MONTH

This month:

Bill Barry Editor of *Non-League Traveler* describes his groundhopping adventures during the closing weeks of last season.

• If you would like to send in an article for this page, please write to us now!

Wednesday, May 4th. -A visit to Bishop's Cleeve to see a club that has done remarkably well since joining the Hellenic League five years ago. A couple of days earlier they had lifted the Premier Division Cup after an exciting and controversial game against their opponents for this match, Tate Iron, with memories of that success, and desperately needing points to avoid the relegation play-offs, this was expected to be a close contest against the league's newly-crowned champions. In fact, Bishop's Cleeve did take an early lead but after that it was one way traffic, with the visitors recording a comfortable 4-1 victory. It left one to wonder how they could possibly have lost to the same opposition just 48 hours earlier. Still, it's a funny old game!

Saturday, May 7th. -By losing at Ipton Town a couple of days earlier Gresley Rovers had blown their chances of winning the Banks's Brewery League championship. Nonetheless, this match against lowly Oldswinford gave them the chance to get back on the winning trail, and they did just that with a 3-0 victory. The visitors hardly scored a shot in the whole 90 minutes, and with a little more effort Gresley would surely have reached double figures.

Mill Street is a very compact little ground, virtually surrounded on all four sides by houses. There are no car parking facilities within the ground as if they had gained entry to the Buzzer Home League and attracted any large crowds, parking in the nearby narrow streets would have been an absolute nightmare.

Saturday, May 14th. -FA Cup Final morning and a 12.30p.m. kick-off at Aberystwyth meant a long drive to the Welsh coast to see a game of no particular importance against Coerlough. In fact, bearing out what Steve Pettit said in the June issue about potentially uninteresting fixtures, this was a match that surpassed expectations. The lowly visitors well-earned their 2-2 draw after twice being behind.

Arriving home shortly after 5p.m., it was too late to see the Cup Final live on the box, so I watched the second half on video. I could tell by my wife's snile that something unexpected had occurred, and lo and behold, the mighty Liverpool had fallen to the unfancied Doncaster. (Have you sobered up yet, Steve??)

Wednesday, May 18th. -Another game that had no right to be anything other than an end of season bore - Cheddar versus Barnstaple, both in mid-table, in a Somerset Senior League Division Two match. The pitch was hard but the grass nearly a foot tall in places, but these teams served up a thoroughly entertaining match and both were with that the season was just beginning and not ending. The home side came from behind to win the game, 2-1.

Saturday, May 21st. -Now this was a game that was expected to be a little bit special - Lew TQ, champions-elect of the Welsh National League (Wrexham Area) against Llan Rhyl, Royal British Legion. In fact, it was a disappointing spectacle for the 150 crowd (including a large number of Groundhoppers). The home side had the benefit of an early own goal and scored themselves a few minutes later to record a comfortable 2-0 victory.

Wednesday, May 25th. -Eton Manor against Convey Island was, on paper, not a game to set the pulses racing, but in a tough and entertaining encounter the visitors came from behind to win 3-2. The crowd of 50 comprised at least half Groundhoppers, but sadly no programme was issued for the match. The locking was a little ferocious at times, and one wondered what it might have been like if this had been an important cup-tie.

Saturday, May 28th. -It is usual to save the best until last, but sadly in this case that cannot be said. I decided to make my annual "pilgrimage" to a League match to visit one of the 40 or so grounds that I had not previously visited. Fellows Park was the venue for the second leg of a match to decide promotion to the Second Division, with Melwell seeking to build on to a two goal advantage that they had achieved at Bristol City a few days earlier. They didn't, and City won a nondescript game 2-0 to force a replay. The match was marred by the outbreaks of violence on the terraces (although nothing compared to the scenes at Stamford Bridge on the same day) caused by a mindless minority who continue to drive decent people away from League grounds and drive another nail into the coffin of British football. No wonder that more and more people are staying at home, or (hopefully) visiting non-League grounds instead. It was a sad end to what had otherwise been an interesting and exciting season.

MIDLAND DIARY

with
Steve
Pettit

In last month's Midland Diary I waxed hysterical about the dubious value of pre-season friendlies, but still ended up watching eight before getting to a competitive game.

Blissley Town's 0 - 0 draw with Birmingham City was truly dreadful, but still better than staying at home in the company of Vase Docksouth and the be-wigged lvy. (They're possible to ignore - I know, because I've tried!). I followed this up with a trip to Great Wyrley (pronounced whirley), where I was in for a pleasant surprise. The Bucks's league outfit looked sharp, and stretched Hednesford all the way, taking the lead three times before succumbing to a late blast from the Pitmen which brought them four goals in the last eighteen minutes. A 0 - 1 scoreline cheered me up no end, not least because the match had been a good one.

My next two matches also involved watching Hednesford Town in action. They lost 2 - 1 at Eastwood Hanley in a hard fought match, then shared the spoils in a 1 - 1 draw with Birmingham City at the Cross Keys. My visit to Eastwood Hanley poses a question for Groundhoppers: 'No gate was taken on the day, so does this count as a 'visit', or not?

The plot of this bunch of pre-season friendlies runs at Harston Road, where Stafford Rangers took on a strong Barnaby eleven and went down 2 - 1. Only in the second half did the gulf between Conference League and Second Division become evident, and even then I thought 'The Tykes' were a little fortunate to win. Warden of little girls wielding dog-eared notebooks and six blades spent most of their time chasing after Allan Clarke, and finally managed to corner him when the match ended.

There were no autograph hunters at Walsenall the following evening, though. Just a handful of hardy fans hunched up against the wind and the rain, watching their favourite take on Ashree Highfield and failing to muster a decent shot between them in the whole ninety minutes. The visitors won 2 - 0.

And so at last to a competitive match, and the chance of an unusual venue. The final of the 34th Mass Charity Vase, between Notts County and Derby County, took place at Burton Rugby Ground. Around 1,000 spectators saw Notts County take a first half lead, which they held until the 91st minute. The Derby supporters were still celebrating their late equaliser when Notts scored again, with what proved to be the last kick of the match. Peel Craft may be used as a venue for some of next year's matches in this competition - if I can find out in time, I'll let you know.

The next day it was off to Streunfer, a trip which is covered elsewhere in this magazine. It was certainly a far cry from Stratford Town, which is where I went next. Evesham United were the visitors for this evening fixture, and were well worth their 2 - 0 win, although the match was somewhat disappointing overall.

At this point I would like to ask Bill Berry a question: Have you considered being a sideline in umpiring, Bill? Whenever I get your NLY magazine through my door I start getting this tremendous headache after about five minutes of reading it, which I am convinced comes from trying to decide which match to go to on the Saturday. I made this shortlist of about twenty for the 20th August, but in the end the lure of Hednesford Town's Southern League opener against Wellingborough proved too much for me, and I wasn't disappointed. Two cracking goals and a brace of penalties in a 2 - 2 draw which was always interesting to watch.

Another 2 - 2 draw followed two days later, when Yeovil Town visited Kidderminster Harriers on the Monday night. There's always a good atmosphere at Aggborough, but I wish somebody would adjust the volume on their tenney. It's quite deafening.

Here's hoping you all enjoy the new season, and see plenty of goals.

Steve Pettit.

THE F.A. CUP DRAW
IN FULL

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THE F.A. VASE DRAW IN FULL

FA CHALLENGE VASE - PRELIMINARY ROUND

SATURDAY 8TH OCTOBER 1966 - £60 2.00

- 1 South Shields or Blackpool Reserves or Walsley or Appleton 14
- 2 Ebb Warming v Newcastle Magpies or Newcastle 11
- 3 Farnham Reserves v Harrogate 10 or Harrogate
- 4 Alnham Town v Horden 10
- 5 Wellingham 10 v Northallerton Town
- 6 Harrogate Town v Wellingham 10
- 7 Doncaster 10 or Harrogate 10 or Doncaster City
- 8 Wokingham or Blackpool Reserves or Doncaster 10 or Wellingham 10
- 9 Doncaster United or Wokingham 10 or Doncaster 10 or Wellingham 10
- 10 Ebb Warming v Wellingham 10
- 11 West Auckland Town v Alnham 10
- 12 Leyland Reserves v Wellingham 10
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TAN PHILLIPS SCORES A BRILLIANT INDIVIDUAL GOAL IN NEWCASTLE TOWN'S 4-1 WIN AT OLDHAM TOWN. PHOTO: JEREMY TAYLOR.

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ACTION FROM THE S. CORNWALL PREMIER, IN THE MATCH BETWEEN NANTHEAN UNITED AND PLYMOUTH COLLEGE. PHOTO: JEREMY TAYLOR.

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--Updates of new members' details will appear in subsequent editions at frequent intervals.



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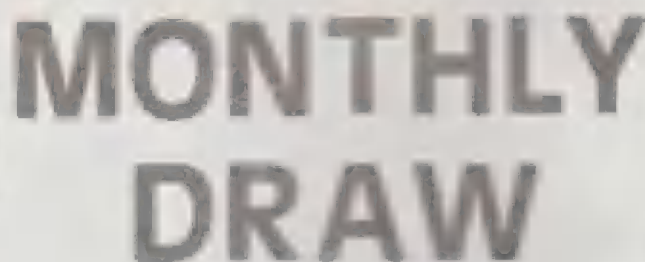
WHITWORTH VALLEY F.C. FLINTON F.C. WEST COUNTIES LEAGUE ACTION WHICH THE VISITING TEAM WON 3-1. PHOTO: A.D. ADAMS.

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WHITWORTH VALLEY F.C. FLINTON F.C. WEST COUNTIES LEAGUE ACTION WHICH THE VISITING TEAM WON 3-1. PHOTO: A.D. ADAMS.

News and views from the Oxfordshire, Bucks, Berks and surrounding areas
With Andy Molden



EUROPE'S TOP 25 STADIUMS: A PERSONAL SELECTION

by R. LILLYWHITE

Noting the attention devoted to European groundhopping in recent issues (two articles on West Germany, Sweden, Italy and Cyprus in issue 9), but the lack of any overall strategy for the practice of Euro-hopping, I have compiled a "Top 25" European football stadiums in order to guide readers to the best of foreign stadiums.

It is not to be treated as a definitive list of what is to be visited, since it is necessarily a subjective selection of the best grounds in Europe. There are a few other reasons why the list shouldn't be seen as completely authoritative. First, a major factor in the grading is architectural impact - this includes the strengths of design from the spectator's point of view, its originality, attractiveness and quality of construction. Second, all but one (Marseille) of the list is in a major city, so the setting may not be to everybody's liking. Having said that, Marseille's stadium has a more urban setting than, say, Nantes. For those who cannot divorce a visit to a ground from its wider situation, more rural settings for smaller grounds, such as St. Mirer or Mallock, will probably add a great deal to their opinion of a ground. Third, the weather affects the success of a stadium. For example, if it's raining, and you are in Kiev, you'll get extremely wet (as well as radiation sickness). If it's raining and you're in Paris, however, there is no problem. Fourth, there may well be one or two omissions. If anyone has suggestions which they think deserve a place in any top 25, I would be more than happy to hear from them. However, a few criteria must be met - only two of the list have capacities of less than 40,000 and all are designed as true stadiums with high priority given to the consideration of spectators. Uniqueness is also an advantage.

You will notice the presence of only one British ground in the Top 25 - Wembley's Wembley Stadium. This is a deliberate reflection of the relatively poor standard of British 'stadiums' compared with the continentals. It would appear to be some time before we can add another British stadium to the list - Cardiff Arms Park would make the list, but it doesn't stage football.

To start, I will list a few of the stadiums which only justed earned inclusion. Just outside the top 25 (not in order) were Helsinki (Olympic Stadium), Sofia (National Stadium), Bucharest (23rd August Stadium), Amsterdam (Olympic Stadium), Antwerp (Beaustadion), Budapest (Népszínház), Dortmund (Westfalen Stadium), Valencia (Estadio Luis Casanova), Frankfurt (Valdstadion), Verona (Stadio Mestegedil), Strasbourg (Stade de la Meinau), Belgrade (Red Star Stadium), Hamburg (Volksparkstadion), Rotterdam (Feyenoord Stadium), Manchester (Old Trafford), Gelsenkirchen (Parkstadion), Florence (Stadio Comunale) and Madrid (Estadio Vicente Calderon).

And so on to the Top 25 stadiums in Europe (in reverse order, of course):

29. ATHENS (Greece) : OLYMPIC STADIUM.

Not favourite to stage the 1996 Olympics, this two-tier stadium should prove to be more than adequate for that event. The Greeks are, of course, the earliest known stadium builders.

28. SAPERO (Italy) : STADIO SAN PAOLO.

The classic bowl shape has been adopted for Italy's largest football venue. The only cover is provided by the overhang of the upper tier, reflecting the Neapolitan climate, but bench seating adds to the comfort.

27. LISBON (Portugal) : ESTADIO DA LUZ.

The prestigious home of Benfica is reminiscent of South American stadiums with its vast expanse of open concrete and roof over one side.

26. LILLE (France) : STADE VAIKOWPR/2-JOUEUR.

Small (25,000) but elegant stadium with a cantilever roof over three sides. A treelined setting, stylish floodlights and a splendid view add to the pleasure of this excellent stadium.

25. BRUSSELS (Belgium) : NEWCASTLE STADIUM.

Deserves its place if only for its significance in the history of European football. Apart from this, viewing from the ends is imperfect, but the stadium is an impressive sight nonetheless.

20. MOSCOW (U.S.S.R.) : DYNAMO STADIUM.

Russian stadiums are notable above all else for their colossal floodlight structures. At Moscow, this goes too far to be weighing down the steelwork pylons. But the most attractive feature of this stadium is the decorative internal sub-latory, recalling the style of roman amphitheatres.

19. Cologne (West Germany) : RINGARDORFER STADION.

The Germans are the undisputed kings of European stadium building. Their trademarks being massive curved cantilever roofs (Frankfurt, Gelsenkirchen) and original floodlight structures (Hessen's angled white frames, Mönchengladbach's cable-tied columns). Cologne's two-tier stadium is an effortless example of high-quality and size rolled into one. It bears more than a passing resemblance to Wembley, but is, of course, superior.

18. Milan (Italy) : ITALICO GIUSEPPE MEAZA.

Extremely advanced for its 1927 construction date, this three tier stadium breaks the Italian mould and is a sight to behold. Better known in this country as the San Siro Stadium, the major drawback is the lack of sufficient cover.

17. Berlin (East Germany) : OLYMPIASTADION.

Designed by 'Hitler's architect' Albert Speer and the less nationalistic Werner March, this significant stadium hosted the infamous 'Nazi Olympics' of 1936. Two massive roofs have since been added, making it even more interesting.

16. Bocum (West Germany) : ARDEN STADION.

A very enclosed and compact stadium offering excellent views underneath a continuous cantilever roof. Why can't we have something like it in Britain?

15. Vienna (Austria) : FRATER STADION.

The recent renovation of this famous old stadium reaffirmed its status as one of Central Europe's sporting landmarks. The close proximity of the equally famous ferris wheel adds to the enjoyment.

14. Göteborg (Sweden) : ULLEVI STADION.

Built in 1958 for the World Cup, this stadium has an attractive rising and falling cantilever roof over its 50,000 capacity. Note the imaginative use of the West side roof support pylons as floodlight pylons as well.

13. Moscow (U.S.S.R.) : LENIN STADION.

The very large venue for the 1980 Olympics is made especially notable by the floodlights. In tourist, the State Tourist organisation, offers tours round Moscow's impressive sporting facilities.

12. Glasgow (Scotland) : IBBEX STADION.

Britain's sole representative in the Top 25 had a very worthy one. Ibbex is a utilitarian and aesthetic success reflecting the great power and tradition of its occupants. A tremendous combination of comfort, safety, attractiveness and atmosphere.

11. Kiev (U.S.S.R.) : REPUBLICAN STADION.

Another of Russia's giant stadiums, this one has very little cover but is an extremely impressive sight. In particular, the entrance is very grand and the gargantuan floodlights angle towards the pitch from solid columns.

10. Barcelona (Spain) : ESTADIO NOU CAMP.

The 'Big Daddy' of Western Europe dates from 1959 but was enlarged to its present 115,000 capacity in 1982, for the World Cup. The bowl shape makes it look quite compact, and the colossal cantilever roof reaches out to make a dramatic intervention within the stadium.

9. Paris (France) : PARC DES PRINCES.

The National Stadium of France is a design classic which elevated architect Roger Taillibert to international fame. The cantilever roof, suspended by striking concrete frames, and the two tiers allow everyone a superb view in a stadium which is not short of atmosphere.

8. Düsseldorf (West Germany) : RHEINSTADION.

Rather reminiscent of the Cardiff Arms Park in shape, the Rheinstadion is a well-executed piece of stadium-building which is one of the better known German venues. The tree-lined South-East end nicely balances a cavernous design, with the roof frames again prominent.

7. Hannover (West Germany) : HEIDERKAMP STADION.

Not simply has an influence over this splendid 60,000 capacity stadium which possesses a variety of styles. The rising and deepening cantilever roof sweeps round half the stadium, faced by a smaller barrel vault roof opposite. The slim floodlights lean dramatically towards the pitch.

6. Madrid (Spain) : CAMPO SAN MAME.

Considering the confined site on which it has been built, this 42,000 capacity stadium is a remarkable achievement. The clever use of multi-tier seating decks adds to its atmosphere, whilst the roof structures are particularly interesting.

BADGERS SET



with
TOBY
JACKSON

BADGERS SET

WITH TOBY JACKSON

It's always encouraging when one's efforts bring a response from readers. It shows that your column gets read if nothing else! Last month I attempted to appease Peter Hindmarch whom I had upset whilst commenting on Blyth Spartans' lack of an enamel badge.

This month it is the turn of Ian Tesson from Fareham who objects to my use of this column to advertise my production / retail badge services as well as my public criticism of Whitby Town's inability to respond to five letters and honour a small debt. He also devotes a fair part of his letter recounting two visits to Wealdstone during which attempts to enter our Social Club were met with similar levels of failure and some choice language. Firstly, Mr. Tesson, the number of complimentary letters I receive convinces me that readers appreciate the chance to buy several badges from one person without the need to write dozens of letters to individual clubs.

Similarly, the 50 clubs who have availed themselves of my production service have all been delighted, and might not have learned about the service but for my GROUNDHOPPER column.

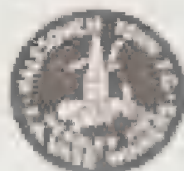
As regards Whitby Town, the end justifies the means! Just to show the effect of a little public criticism: out of the blue I received my delivery of badges from the club after a nine month wait! Thank you, Whitby Town. Criticism can be constructive!

On the subject of the Wealdstone Social Club, let me tell Mr. Tesson that as a teenager I was banned for some eight years as a result of criticising the set-up in our local paper! These days the place is much-changed and more inviting: a public license has replaced the "Members only" arrangement, and with Club Chairman, Alan Clifton, the licensed victualler in charge, and his wife overseeing the catering, a friendly welcome awaits.

Mr. Tesson has insisted that I stick to reviewing badges, so in order to show there are no hard feelings, I shall take a look this month at the Buzzer Boxes (Southern League, Midland Division).

To the best of my knowledge, newcomers Ashres Highfield have no badge on offer at their Oldbury ground, although with a name like "The Stags" that could easily be rectified. At Sheepy Road, Atherstone United sell a smart enamel badge in black, white and red - featuring two entwined adders (the club nickname). Banbury United only had some plastic button badges on sale last season when we visited them: I have shown one of their former issues. With a listed nickname of the "Gay Portlands", I suppose one has to be careful! As Queen Street has connections!), Kilsen Town can only muster a plastic badge in orange and black with a central white football. Bridgnorth Town do Shropshire proud with a large circular blue and white enamel badge shown on the left. As





far as I know Coventry Sparring have no badges on sale. I have shown an older badge from the club. Dudley Town's fine red, white and green enamel re-ligues should be on sale at their new ground soon. One of the best badges in this League can be found at Forest Green Rovers: their motto "Green for Go" was up the outlook at "The Lawn" where you can buy a light green enamel badge with an attractive central crest. I did not receive a reply from Gloucester City when I wrote last September, but prior to then the club were selling a smart yellow and black Supporters Club badge featuring a tiger's head. Another of the best badges in the League was available at Grantham until last Christmas when stocks expired. Further supplies were anticipated. An shortage of badges at Halesowen Town with three badges to commemorate successes in the 1985 and 1986 F.A. Vase competitions and a run of Championship wins in the West Midlands League. Stocks were on the low side at the Cross Keys Ground when I last enquired, but I have depicted the last issue on sale at Hednesford Town. In Norfolk, King's Lynn's Club Shop is under new management and lapel badges are planned as part of several souvenirs to be sold. One of the Ginnets' former badges is depicted on the left. No badges are available at Mile Oak Rovers. Little excuse can be offered by a club of Nunston Borough's standing for not offering its supporters a decent badge, but the Manor Park ground has only seen an assortment of plastic issues over the last few traumatic seasons (see the January BADGERS SET). A smart badge from happier days is shown on the right. No badges are on sale at Hayden Wood for Rushden Town, and Spalding United's blue and white enamel badges have long since expired at their Lincolnshire ground where a plastic issue has been on offer. At Stourbridge, the Glassboys have had excellent enamel badges on sale for both the Football Club (shown right) and the Supporters Club. At Colas Lane, Sutton Coldfield Town kept me waiting quite a while last season before issuing a new enamel badge in blue and in white colour variations. Tamworth did the Banks Brewery League proud not only by their performances on the field last season, but by bringing out a fine red and white enamel issue. All badge in review at Wellingborough Town, and only an over-priced and horrific plastic issue at Willenhall Town whose excellent enamel badge of bygone years was shown in my January column. See you next month!

WOULD ALL SUBSCRIBERS WHO WISH TO RENEW FOR ANOTHER YEAR PLEASE ENSURE THAT THE CORRECT NUMBER OF ADDRESSED LABELS ARE SENT WITH YOUR REMITTANCE. THIS PREVENTS DELAYS.



HOPPER POST

The LETTER OF THE MONTH now earns the sender a 'Groundhopper Magazine' notebook and a set of six coasters in presentation box.



HERE'S YOUR CHANCE TO HAVE YOUR SAY.

What do you think of the magazine? Do you have any amusing groundhopper tales? Do you have any comments about Non-League Football in general? Write to:

Hopper Post,
Groundhopper Magazine,
439 Merton Road,
Wandsworth SW18 5LB

Dear GROUNDHOPPER MAGAZINE,

"In future, we will only publish features that promote non-league football. We will leave any controversy and bickering off to other magazines".

This was written by yourself in an earlier edition of GROUNDHOPPER MAGAZINE. So why waste valuable space allowing Toby Jackson to criticise Whitby Town? I have visited this club on a number of occasions and always found the officials friendly and helpful, unlike one or two clubs I could mention! The time I was to Whitby requesting a badge, I received by return post the badge, some programmes, and a postcard of the ground.

During my groundhopping career I've had no more than a handful of complaints about the way I've been treated at a ground or lack of replies to letters requesting information or souvenirs. Two of those complaints concerned the same club. However, those complaints were personal between myself and the club and of no interest to anyone else. Unlike Toby Jackson, I would never dream of making my complaints 'public' and never pompously felt that I had a right to highlight my behaviour. Just who does he think he is?

Toby should just stick to reviewing badges in his column. One final point - his column is no more than a glorified advert for his lapels business (especially his August column), does he pay the full advertising rates?

IAN TEWSON, 16 MARTIN AVENUE, STUBINGTON, PARRHAM, HAMPSHIRE, PO14 2RT.

Editor's Reply: It seems that poor Toby can do no right these days! I'm surprised that his comments seem to have hit a nerve with so many of you. His badge column is supposed to offer a service to our readers as well as offer news and views from the badge scene generally. It is only fair that if Whitley failed to deliver badges after a cheque was cashed, Toby is entitled to warn readers that the same COULD happen to them. Equally so, if readers write in to oppose those views, we will express them through these pages. After all, that's what "Hopper Post" is here for! I'm glad that they located you OK at Whitley, but there may be others who didn't receive the same treatment when writing for Hoppers. I am sure that Toby's justification in writing those comments as featured in last month's code will help you to understand why he wrote it. And incidentally, he did give the reason for his August column not being up to his usual standard - he was on his honeymoon at the time.

Dear GROUNDHOPPER MAGAZINE,

In response to Colin Peel's letter in Issue 11, I am taking the opportunity to answer his complaints. It's nice to see someone criticise us for a change, seriously, let us consider what he said.

To start with, I will not back down from my comments over clubs moving grounds. There are only 3 really successful moves I can think of - Gloucester City, Weymouth and Aylesbury United. Many other clubs have moved grounds, but ended up with spartan spectator facilities and horrendous playing surfaces - Cambridge City, Redhill and Leicester United are all good (bad?) examples of this. But have still yet to make my strongest point, which is that many clubs - Romford, Ilford, Addlestone, Willingdon to name but a few - have made the indescribably stupid error of selling their old grounds before having obtained planning permission for a new ground. The end result is that these clubs either go into a long period of 'hibernation' or worse still, merge or fold altogether. At the time of writing, Dartford and Ashford Town (Kent) face similar problems. In fact, I feel that the situation is becoming so serious that it is high time the Football Association stepped in and drew up guidelines for any of their member clubs competing or contemplating a change of ground.

As for Colin Peel's claim that I have 'fallen prey to the media image of the football hooligan', I can assure him that I have not! In fact, there are few things that I hate more than the millionaire-owned Fleet Street (Wapping?) press which spends its time vilifying not only the Labour Party and the Trade Unions but also the game of football as well. I do not wish to enter into a political dispute, but it does seem to me that the current 'hooligan problem' is one that has largely been invented by a Government desperate to deflect attention away from its cuts to the health service and social services. Hence the draconian measures of identity cards for all league clubs, due to take effect from 1989-90.

Gavin Peal mentions a number of books written by sociologists. He may be surprised to know that I studied sociology at Polytechnic!! I therefore know a lot about the various arguments about the causes of hooliganism. Another point I would like to make is that I never actually said that all Chelsea fans are hooligans. However, I do believe that Chelsea have a larger proportion of yobs following them than any other club. I have only been to Stamford Bridge for a first-team game ever, despite the fact that I live only an hour's tube ride away. This match was seven years ago, and the fact that I had to dodge flying bricks at the end has meant that the only time I have been there since was for a reserve match against Oxford United reserves.

MR C. ASHBIDGE, 61 WURGENT ROAD, SOUTHWATE, LONDON, W14 5QH.

P.S. : By the way, has anyone noticed the resemblance between actor Marion Brande and Tony Middleton on page 8 of issue 11?

Editor's Reply: I expect Tony Middleton would like Marion Brande's money - that's for sure. Anyway, this opens up this debate to our readers. Are his money talks working in new grounds and getting way to rapidly developed? Is it good for the groundhopper's point of view? Do you mind having in go back to the same club to watch another game on a different ground? Let us hear from you, and we'll publish the best of your letters and comments.

Dear GROUNDHOPPER MAGAZINE,

I was disappointed, but not surprised, to read the letter from Peter Windmarch in the August issue of GPM, regarding enamel badges, and in particular the 'Badgers Bet' articles by Toby Jackson.

Firstly, let me outline my own interests in this matter. I am the Editor of the Association of Football Badge Collectors Newsletter, and a keen collector of official Football Club enamel badges.

So much, it is unbelievably frustrating to see clubs, both league and non-league, producing poor quality, non-enamel badges, which cost less, but sell so much slower, if at all, and concluding therefore, that the production of badges is not a viable proposition.

Contrary to Peter's content, the reality is that a good quality enamel lapel badge does sell; to the club's own supporters, visiting fans, and badge collectors alike. The AFBC has over 200 members, and can therefore "guarantee" sales of around 100 per club's enamel badge alone, league or non-league. Within 3 months of advertising these in our Club Newsletter.

With a manufacturers' minimum order of 700 badges at a cost of around £1.45 per badge inclusive, or more realistically, 200 badges at around £1.25 per badge, surely neither the cost, nor the necessary sale price, which produces a tidy little profit, are prohibitive to any club.

I'm sure Toby would also find it offensive for Peter to suggest he is making a massive profit out of persuading clubs to produce badges. Just think of the time Toby puts in on behalf of the clubs who have, in fact, benefitted financially themselves. Try asking the clubs and I'm sure you'll change your mind. Indeed, if Peter would like more information on the practicalities, he can contact myself, who, I can assure him, is not motivated by profit, but merely the desire to try to show clubs the "error of their ways."

SMITH WILKINSON, 18 HINTON STREET, FAIRFIELD, LIVERPOOL, L6 1AN, MERseyside.

Editor's Reply: As a former keen enamel badge collector myself, who at one time produced a monthly football badge magazine, I can only agree with all that Keith has said above. Anything other than an enamel badge is a sub-standard product, and it is a great shame that clubs cannot realize this. If only they were to put a little thought into having a PROPER badge made instead of a kid's gimmicky effort, then we would all be happy. But unfortunately, because the club officials who decide to have a badge made have little or no knowledge of the badge scene or what collectors actually want, they pay the cut costs by having awful, cheap-looking "badges" made. True collectors wouldn't be seen dead with one of these!

Dear GROUNDHOPPER MAGAZINE,

I would like to contrast the apparent differing attitudes of two clubs. Towards the end of last season, we made the midweek evening visits to Hailsham Town and Havant Town.

Because of organisational problems, neither club issued programmes on the night. Therefore, I wrote to the relevant secretaries, expressing my disappointment and requesting some back issues, enclosing a cheque to cover costs.

Hailsham Town immediately sent us a selection of programmes. Havant did not. I would have shrugged this off, except for the fact that my cheque was presented almost immediately. A subsequent letter from us has, so far, been apparently ignored. So, my message is, beware Havant Town!

JIM TAYLOR, 199 STON LANE, OSTERLEY, MIDDLESEX, TW7 5PE.

Editor's Reply: Maybe they still HAVANT got any programmes in stock! Sorry though, this is becoming increasingly more of a problem all the time. When cheques are sent and cashed, but nothing sent in return, it is annoying and frustrating.



STEVE PETTIT'S GROUNDHOPPER'S CLUB NEWS

THE GROUNDHOPPER'S CLUB NEWS & REVIEW PAGE

This month I begin the column with a review of our recent trip to Stranraer, and news of a new travel club formed as a result of that trip.

First, Stranraer.

The first picking-up point was on the main road outside Widdale Football Club, at 8 in the morning. Ray Owen, driver for the day, picked five of us up here, and although we were a little late leaving we made good time on the M6, and were soon at Widdale to pick up the next two hardy pioneers. Our last port of call was Ayr, where we picked up John Timms at the junction of the A76/A66. (I think).

The 'special' breakfast some of us purchased at a motorway services somewhere near Lancaster was memorable, and the only thing I can see that was special about it is that we all somehow managed to survive communal. Nevertheless, it didn't ruin our appetite for what turned out to be a marvellous day out.

The mood of the party was good, and the atmosphere pleasant and relaxed. It's amazing how time flies on a long journey when you're in the company of several other people with similar interests. To pass the time we held a light-hearted quiz, mainly for the benefit of Ray's son Robert (only eleven, and he's been in over three hundred grounds!). The questions soon started getting silly: 'What was Hawthorn's latest win?' 'When did they become Leytonstone & Ilford?', for example. Or 'Who was the F.A.C.U.P. in 1900?' 'What was the last league winning season?'

The 62 new party wanted shopping and at Duffries, as Queen of the South was on his agenda. Something to say, the rest of us took the opportunity to have a look around Queen's ground, and the friendly Head Groundsman there also showed us around the dressing rooms, etc. He was certainly very helpful, and full of interesting facts and information, and through this column I would like to pass on my thanks to him.

The scenery in the part of Scotland between Carlisle and Stranraer is pleasant rather than spectacular, and it's still nice to visit these different places. We arrived at Stranraer just after one, and split up into groups according to whichever immediate activity we wanted to pursue.

The barman in the Pannochiel Inn on Stranraer quayside looked at us in disbelief when we told him we'd come all this way "just to watch Stranraer". (His words). Well, he did ask, and at least now he can tell his friends he's got some penitently mad customers.

Stair Park were or less lived down to our expectations. The small stand is similar, but older, to the one at Widdale, while the covered terracing opposite is in a sorry state of repair. The centre area of this terracing has collapsed inside, and is roped off, but both ends are still in use. I get the impression that this structure would not be used at all if it were on an English non-league ground. The rest of the ground is well laid out, although I imagine that if Stranraer were down at home to a big club in the Scottish Cup a change of venue would be necessary.

The match itself was a good one, particularly in the second half. Arbroath won with a thirtieth minute goal, and dominated for long periods in the middle part of the match, with the home side looking better at the start and towards the end of the proceedings. One element of the Scottish matches I have watched so far which I find pleasurable is that less emphasis appears to be put on teams playing offside tactics. The football is open, with the teams on doing the simpler things.

I am convinced that the Scottish minute is only fifty seconds long, as the matches always seem to pass quickly. In no time at all we were back on the wagon and heading home. After picking up Colin Gilbert at Duffries our next stop was Gretna for supper. 75p for food and chips is not to be sneezed at, and the portions were more than adequate.

It was when we stopped for a mid-evening coffee break on the motorway that the idea for forming an independent travel club was first mooted. We were discussing where to go on our next trip, and how much this was likely to cost, when some bright spark suggested a standard charge for all trips, with the money left over at the end of the day to be placed into a fund. The idea behind this is that after several trips we will have enough in the fund to finance a free one. (Or one at greatly reduced cost!). The logical step from there was to form a proper travel club!

THE 'HOPPER ROUND BRITAIN' CLUB

Membership is open to anybody interested in joining us on our long distance trips to Scotland, and the north east and south east of England. There is no membership fee, although interested parties are asked to send us 6 x 1p stamps to help offset the cost of postage and photocopying of our regular bulletins. (Either 5 or 6 per season!). This club will become properly constituted in due course, and membership will be open to all. For future trips a standard charge of £25 per person applies, with the surplus banked from each trip until we have sufficient funds to arrange a special trip. The cost per person for a special trip will then be worked out according to how many trips each member has made in the past, with those who have been every time or have only missed once going for nothing, and other members being offered a place at greatly reduced discounts. Where a person wishes to join us on a special trip and they haven't been with us before the standard rate of £25 will apply. Under 16's may travel at half price, but not at the expense of a full paying member.

Every effort will be made to accommodate members who live too far away from each trip's departure point (usually the Birmingham area), and for those who live on or near the route of our future trips we will arrange to pick them up. Should we find that demand for a trip is particularly high we will hire a minibus with a larger seating capacity, to avoid disappointment.

I feel this kind of outing is going to prove very popular in the future. The fact that eight of the ten people who went on the Stranraer trip have already booked for our next trip proves just how enjoyable these days out are.

Our next trip will take place on Saturday 25th October, when we return to Scotland to see Stirling Castle (also on Brechin City. If you are interested in coming along please get in touch with me as soon as possible, or contact our Club Treasurer:- Ray Owen, 19, Chouletton Way, Leyfields, Tamworth, Staffordshire.

You can be sure of having a good time! - - - - -

THE TEA BAR OF THE YEAR AWARD

I have received no nominations as yet, although these are early days. I noticed in his column last month that Andy Holden put in a good word for Whittington Town's tea bar, and hope that Andy will contact me with a suitable nomination. Don't forget that the person nominating the eventual winner of this new award will receive a cash prize, so please get writing!

The idea of launching this award is to offer some reward to those working heroes of our football grounds - those people who give up their time to supply you with hot drinks and (usually) fresh food on freezing cold November afternoons.

The ladies who run the tea bar at Middlesbrough (Manks's League) deserve recognition. Lily and Joan offer an excellent cup of tea, and are cheerful ladies willing to share a joke and have a quick chat with you. With tea at 14p, coffee at 15p, and their filled rolls (or 'cobs', as they are called in this neck of the woods) at just 50p, good value is guaranteed. It's meeting people like this which helps to make a trip to a non-league ground so pleasurable.

GROUNDHOPPER MAGAZINE SOUVENIRS

THE RANGE OF GROUNDHOPPER MAGAZINE SOUVENIRS AS PREVIOUSLY ADVERTISED IN EARLIER ISSUES (SUCH AS MUGS, NOTEBOOKS, BINDERS, PENS, ETC) ARE NO LONGER AVAILABLE. PLEASE DO NOT WRITE IN REQUESTING THEM, AS WE WILL REGRETTABLY HAVE TO RETURN ALL MONEY.

Last month from now on we will use one page where members can exchange news and information, etc. If you have some news or information to share, or need help with something, simply write with the details to:- Steve Pettit, 11, Sunley Drive, Rednorsford, Staffs, WS22 5NF.

Before we begin this month's page I'd just like to say how pleased I am to see a regular feature on the Welsh scene. I have long thought that Welsh football is one area that could do with more exposure, and I shall look forward to reading Dave Collins' regular contributions this season.

We are still receiving new membership applications every day, and it won't be too long before we break that magical 300 barrier. My apologies to those who have sent in applications and still await their membership cards. Steve King is now having some more made up, and as soon as I receive the new batch I'll send them out. It's pleasing to see so many officials from clubs around the country joining the Groundhoppers Club. As usual, of course, despite the name, essentially a club for all followers of non-league football, and membership is open to anybody, regardless of age, specific interests, etc.

Issue 5 of the GROUNDHOPPERS CLUB JOURNAL was despatched in July, and all original subscribers (pre-merger) should have received their copy by now.

Paul Cottler would like to hear from any owners living in the North West who might be planning a trip to Crystal Palace and/or Slough Rangers this season. Paul, a South Liverpool supporter, resides at:- 1, Beehill Close, Epaka, Liverpool 14, EN4, and will be willing to share petrol costs with anybody planning a trip to either of these grounds.

Steve Woods offers seats in his car to those interested in visiting the Welsh grounds and sharing the petrol costs. His address is:- "Frondey Gungliew", Wlamplwyf, Aberystwyth, Ceredigion, SY23 4BB. Please let your comments about or photograph, Steve, via early go-and-see!!

Special notice for ANNE'S TIME OF SALE. Lord Gethorne of Hildesheim is holding some attractive scarfs to ransom, and will return if "at the first opportunity". Lord Gethorne was also early about my suggestion - cheers, a'leed!!

FIVESTAR FOOTBALL CLUB are in need of a new programme editor, following the resignation of the Old Club's own Nick Joyce going to prosecution of work. If this position interests you please get in touch with Patch Secretary Rich Stanley, at 18, Junction Street, Oldbury, Warrley, West Midlands, B66 3NB. Nick would also like to hear from anybody who might be interested in organising a programme fair at the ground some time during this coming season. Fivestars are a friendly club composed of pleasant people, and judging by their early season fare they would do well this time round.

Dave Bradley and his friend are planning a week long assault on grounds in the north of England, with particular emphasis on the Northern Premier League. If you are interested in joining them and sharing the petrol costs please get in touch with Dave at 19, Fisherswood, Milton Keynes, Bucks.

You will probably have read elsewhere that BRADFORD PARK AVENUE are to attempt a comeback, and plan to apply for entry into the North West Counties League in time for next season. Managing Director Trevor Standa will be pleased to help with any inquiries regarding the club, who currently compete in the West Riding County Amateur League. Write to the care of the club, Burnley/Barns Mill Ground, Burnley Road, Bradford 9. Please enclose an a.s.c. when writing.....

I intend visiting Ynion Yow's ground sometime this season, so I haven't yet been there, and can offer them spare seats in my car. If you're interested please get in touch with me at the usual address, or telephone 05436 1000. If I fill the car I estimate the cost to be between £1 - £2 from the West Midlands area. (Per person, I might add).

THE EASTERN SCENE - from Page 13

Visitors to Bournemouth will find little in the way of cars and eating places on the ground, but the Town centre has a good choice. Bournemouth is, of course, famous for its racing, and there is a number of horse racing in the town and a chance to see the horses training on the Downs every day. Other clubs nearby are Cambridge United and City (12 miles), Bury Town (12 miles), and fellow non-league Weymouth City and Solihull Town.

The telephone number of the ground is 053637, Secretary 053920.

GROUNDHOPPERS CLUB CONVENTION NEWS

WESTON SUPER MARE * BIDEFORD
WESTON SUPER MARE SUPPORTERS * GROUNDHOPPERS UNITED

(Kick off 3.00.0)
(Kick off 12.00.0)

Saturday 12th November, at Woodspring Park

At last we are off to the West Country for one of our conventions, and I am particularly delighted at the choice of venue. Weston's Commercial Manager Phil Wright and I have got together to arrange this meeting, which, following the success of our conventions at Hednesford Town and Halesworth, will follow a similar pattern.

Groundhoppers United will once again be in action, kicking off at noon, and it is hoped that we will be able to emulate last season's performance by providing the more discerning spectator with plenty of goals. (Average goals per match in United matches = 9.1). A charge of £1 per player will be made, and together with the £1 per entrant quiz money (less a cash prize for the winner(s)) will be handed to the club to pass on to a local charity of their choice.

The quiz will 'kick off' at around 1.45 p.m., and if somebody else would like to have a go at organizing it I would be delighted to hear from them.

Bideford provide the opposition in the Great Hills League match, which I am already looking forward to. Phil is also considering using this event to stage a programme fair. Anybody interested in having a stall, say, either contact Phil or me for further details.

As usual I shall prepare an information pack, available to anybody in exchange for an a.s.c. This pack will include ground and travel directions, and a more detailed timetable of the day's events. I will also try, where possible, to fix me - our owners up with lifts to and from the ground.

Our Groundhoppers conventions are becoming ever popular, and are a good way of having a pleasant day out. Please support these events by attending and taking part in our various functions. Apart from enjoying yourself you will also be helping a worthy cause.

More details of the Weston Super Mare Convention will follow in next month's Groundhopper Magazine. Watch this space!

"If you are a club official and think your club might be interested in staging a future Groundhoppers Club convention, please write to me at the usual address. (See inside back cover). I have now compiled a 'CONVENTION INFORMATION SHEET', and will gladly send you a copy."

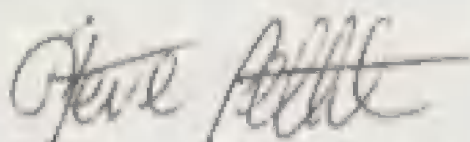
PREVIOUS CONVENTIONS

Saturday 21st Feb, 1987. Witney Town 1, Heddligh United.
Saturday 7th Apr, 1987. Stammerford Town 1, Haverhill Rovers 2.
Sat 15th Aug, '87: East Ham 0, Brentwood 2. (East H Yth 6, OM Utd 1)
Sat 9th Apr, '88: Rainworth 0, Keyworth 1. (OM Utd 6, West of World XI 4)
Sat 10th Apr, '88: Hednesford 0, Northyr 1. (Heds Supp 2, OM Utd 3)
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ADVANCE NOTICE

On Monday 29th May, 1989, Hednesford Town are hosting a grand open 5-a-side tournament at the Cross Keys ground. Entries from teams of five or six (allowing for 1 sub) will be accepted from 21st September, 1988. The entry fee is £6 per team, and trophies and medals will be awarded to the winning team. All teams are guaranteed a minimum of three matches, with the first round to be played on a league basis, followed by sudden death knock out in ensuing rounds. There will also be clubhouse and programme stalls, refreshments, an all day bar, etc.

Full details from Steve Pettit, 11, Sunley Drive, Hednesford, Staffs, or from Tex Brumpton, 16, Queen Street, Hednesford, Staffs. S.A.E., please.



3. VALDÉS (Spain) : ESTADIO DE VALDÉS.

A further illustration of tier-stacking to accommodate more spectators nearer the pitch - a characteristic of Spanish stadiums. The renovation for the 1982 World Cup gave it an excellent roof (note how thick facade) some three sides and a more enclosed feel.

4. SAINT-ETIENNE (France) : STADE DE LA BEAUMAISON.

Opened in 1984 just before the European Championships. Saint-Étienne picked a green field site with good access and constructed a futuristic masterpiece of stadium building. The cantilever roof rises and falls in a most attractive fashion, whilst the exposed roof frames at either end give it a spidery appearance, a sheer pleasure to visit.

5. WOLFF (Germany) : STADION WOLFF.

Built in 1979, this well-located stadium has perhaps the most interesting roof structure in Europe after Munich. The stadium is circular in plan, with both ends open for the mountain views. On either side, two massive cantilever roofs arch over the seats, dominated by the complex space frame. A fine for such a development in Britain.



Stadium - Stade de la Beaucaire - Saint-Étienne (see General Index), built in 1984-85. Photo by R. Liddipole.



Stadium - Stadion Wölfe - Wolfsburg (see General Index), built in 1979-80. Photo by R. Liddipole.

6. OLYMPIA (France) : STADIUM OLYMPIA.

Despite its relatively low 20,000 capacity, this 1986 construction arguably has the highest quality facilities in the whole of Europe. How many stadiums have Olympic-sized swimming pools and 2,000-seater basketball courts under the green pitch? The spectator experience is also of the highest quality for either standing or seated spectators. A fascinating roof structure is complemented by the adjacent South arch. I am away now. Cont'd next page.

Another summer (what there was of it) over, and thoughts turn to a new season. As my predictions always turn out wrong anyway, I thought I'd ask my groundhopping chum Melvyn what he'd got up to during the close season, and for his thoughts on the new one.

"Well, where do I start, where DO I start?", said Mervyn. "I sorted out all my programmes - what memories they brought back. Dark nights spent at Chelmsford and Hemel Hempstead with Maurice and Trevor, a midwinter rendezvous with Roger at Gretna, and that lovely May evening Raymond surprised me by turning up at an early kick-off at Seaford." "But" he continued, "I don't think anything will surpass that August Saturday when a few of us went up to Scotland to get a few Highland League grounds in before everything else started. In the clubhouse, we were discussing Ilfracombe's new toilets, when Gerald suddenly rushed from his chair, spilling my flask of cocoa all over my new trousers. He returned, breathless but triumphant, a couple of minutes later. "I've got six" he shouted brandishing the four-sided blue and white programme that the host club's secretary had given him from the previous week's friendly at Kyle of Lochalsh. "I spotted him carrying something that looked like programmes, but I knew they couldn't be today's, as they are maroon and black, so I just had to get in there" Gerald explained over a Lucozade Light later. Fortunately my trousers were brown so the stains didn't show anyway".

Having got his memories of last season, I asked Melvyn for his thoughts on the new one. He started with his opinions on the OM Vauxhall Conference. "Well, I'm glad we've got that Lincoln City back where they belong, with those beastly Barclay League clubs. Stuart asked me along for their match with Wycombe, and, I ask you, I didn't have room on the terraces to take my notebook out of my bag. It's the only game I've ever been to where I couldn't note the team changes. I say, I SAY - 9,000 for a non-league game! It's so unfair you know. I'll welcome Newport because they won't get big crowds - at least there's space to swing your shoulder bag. And I've always had a soft spot for the Welsh, ever since Ivor offered me a swig of his Vinto at Llanelli in 1981. Chorley, I've never been there - it's one of those grounds I keep MEANING to get to. Aylesbury - didn't they let us down. Letting those nasty England players turn out on their pitch and as for Yeovil, what can I say, what can I SAY? Clifford gave me a lift down there a couple of years ago when they played Sutton. We went in with the home fans - what a crowd. They were all singing and shouting before the game, while all I wanted to do was drink my Ribena in peace. And, as the teams came out, there was so much jostling and pushing that we had to ask a policeman if we could go and stand with the Sutton fans. "We're both neutrals" I told him as he let Clifford and I through the gate. Well, although we weren't along the halfway line we could see better and had space to make our notes." Melvyn continued at length to go through his list of the grounds he wanted to get to in the coming season.

"But I wonder if my ultimate groundhopping experience will ever be realised" teased Melvyn. I thought that he was going to relate some improbable, but possible feat such as watching matches in three different countries on the same day.

His answer told me more about him than programmes ever will.

"Well, I mean - meeting a groundhopper named QUENTIN at QUEEN of the South."

EUROPE'S TOP 25 STADIUMS - continued.

1. MUNICH (West Germany) : OLYMPIA STADIUM.

If architectural impact is a central criterion in this Top 25, then Munich's 1972 Olympia Stadium is a clear winner. Few will argue that the massive outlay on such an original roof has not been worthwhile. Briefly, the roof over the West side of the 78,000 capacity stadium is a prestressed cable-net construction with high and low points suspended from steel masts. The roof covering is acrylic glass. Although this roof is undoubtedly the finest in Europe, half the stadium is still uncovered. The roof itself is too cluttered with lights and speakers and more elegant floodlights would have been in keeping with the overall scheme. Nevertheless, Munich's Olympia Stadium well deserves its place as Europe's Number One.

This concludes my review of Europe's top football stadia. If you have any comments, please pass them on through Groundhopper Magazine. More important, if you know of a stadium deserving a place in the Top 25, please send in a photo (which will be returned) and state why it is better than the above.

In the meantime, Happy Euro-hopping!

* ALL INFORMATION KINDLY SUPPLIED BY R LILLYWHITE (INCLUDING PHOTOGRAPHS).

The Continental View

by Richard Crabtree



BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS....By Richard Crabtree.

In a moment of madness recently, while I was idly flicking through the current issue of the GROUNDHOPPER MAGAZINE, it occurred to me that if a successful trip could be organised by readers of this organ to an outpost such as Brechin, then why not one also to Brussels or Bremen? If the romantic notion of Glesbo Park with its turnstiles built into a hedge is appealing enough for otherwise rational members of the human race to leave home at ungodly hours, how much more so the delights of continental Europe with its wide variety of sights, food and wine, not to mention one or two football stadia thrown in for good measure.

The sheer variety of experiences to be had in countries such as France, Belgium and Holland in comparison with our own is not to be lightly dismissed, nor the relative freedom of club football when contrasted with its national counterpart which can, as seen in the last European Championships, lead to tension-bedecked contests. Europe has many footballing jewels in its crown and the concept of sharing these experiences with like-minded enthusiasts must surely appeal to a percentage of our readership.

Casting aside the theoretical for a moment to return to the practical, such an escapade would probably take the form of a long weekend trying to cram as much football and sightseeing into a few days as possible, rather like American tourists visiting Europe working out what country they are in by the day of the week. One game on a Friday night, one on a Saturday afternoon, and one on Saturday evening, and one on Sunday afternoon would be the basis of a trip such as this. As mentioned in previous issues, this would involve a cross-border dash between neighbouring countries on the Saturday and would rely on public transport systems operating smoothly, which is usually the case on the continent.

Although the concept of club membership does not appear to appeal to readers of this magazine in the same way that it does for the clubs formed on the continent whose members visit English grounds, there is another very topical aspect of such a venture, showing the true face of English football supporters to their continental counterparts rather than the negative one portrayed by hooligans.

This image is not so badly tarnished as people might believe due largely to the lack of proportion and perspective of most of the English newspapers, yet it needs repairing, and organised trips by readers of this magazine could in their own small way, go towards breaking a well-established stereotype.

All that remains to be done is for this article to be published and for the offer to flood or trickle in to the Editor. Mention of possible duty-free purchases might even encourage him to overcome his xenophobia and join the happy throng. We live in hope....

RICHARD CRABTREE

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2. Membership of the Groundhoppers Club is FREE. To join, write to Steve Pettit (Membership Secretary) at the address on the inside front cover, enclosing full details such as your name, address, groundhopping interests, etc. Also, please enclose a s.a.s. for the return of your membership card.
3. Once you become a member you are entitled to certain privileges as outlined in the club literature detailed elsewhere.
4. As a club it will be financed in association with Groundhopper Magazine, and all members will receive an annual statement of accounts at the A.G.M. on a date to be arranged, probably on the day of a convention at a non-league venue to be decided. Full details will appear in the magazine.
5. There will be conventions, organised trips to grounds and fundraising events throughout the year, jointly arranged by the Groundhopper Magazine and Groundhoppers Club.
6. Groundhopper Magazine is published EVERY month throughout the year, with current subscription rates shown on the inside front cover. Contained in each issue are full details of all Club events such as news of conventions, etc.
7. If sending photographs for inclusion in the magazine, please note that there may be a delay in returning them if more than six are sent at once. The process for preparing them for publication is expensive, and we can therefore only use photos for one issue at a time. Please ALWAYS indicate when sending photos whether you would like them returned or whether we can retain them.
8. The magazine is usually despatched on the 15th of each month, subject to copy deadlines being met with our printers. You should receive your magazine about two weeks prior to cover date. (i.e. January issue received 15th or 17th December).
9. We cannot be held responsible for material being lost in the post when being returned to originate after use (such as photos, etc.).
10. The magazine is available on SUBSCRIPTION ONLY. When you are coming to the end of your subscription we will send you a letter reminding you that it is time to renew, and will enclose a new subscription form.
11. A joint Groundhoppers Club and Magazine Committee has been formed, with the purpose of helping to organise events, help with fund-raising, etc. if YOU would like to join please write to Steve King for full details.
12. A limited number of back issues of Groundhopper Magazine are available from Ron Jones, 24 Poplar Road, Wimbledon, London SW19 3JR. For current availability please check elsewhere in this month's issue.
13. For copy dates for this year's issues, please see elsewhere for full details, which also includes despatch dates for the magazine.
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